Decentralized Local Government: Challenges and Issues: St. Louis
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Decentralization: County and Municipal Government

**State**

**County** Created by State Government

**Municipal** Created by Local Citizens with State Government Approval

Counties are Decentralized (Do Not Report to State Government)

- County Executive
- County Council
- County Courts

Municipalities are Decentralized (Do NOT Report to County Government)

- Mayor
- City Council
- City Attorney*
- City Judge*

*Both are typically appointed by the mayor and/or council.*
Decentralization at the County and Municipality Level
(Numerous Independent Special Districts)

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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
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<td>Special Districts (number and purpose varies greatly from county to county)</td>
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Independent Special Districts Include:

- School Districts
- Fire Protection Districts
- Park and Zoo Districts
- Community College
- Water District
- Transportation Development District

- Tax Increment Financing District
- Neighborhood Improvement District
- Community Improvement District
- Lighting District
- Sewer District
- Library Districts
Municipalities in St. Louis County

- 90 Municipalities in St. Louis County
- 70 have populations under 10,000
- Most of Missouri Very Decentralized

- 2/3 Population In municipalities 1/3 unincorporated
- County population = 1 million for 35 years
- St Louis City is NOT in St. Louis County

- 1876 St. Louis Froze City Limits
Centralization is opposed because of traditional American concerns over accountability and control.

- A basic American value is decentralization, limited government control, and individual responsibility.
- Multiple units of government are involved in making public policy.
- There are more governments in the St. Louis region than nations at the United Nations.
- The municipalities in St. Louis County were created by the citizens to provide essential public services.
Cooperation: There is extensive cooperation within St. Louis County
Communication Among Cities: Extensive Networks of Communication Exist for Municipal Governments

- Cities meet regular, operate “list-serve”
- City Managers (both sides of river)
- City Clerks & Finance Officers
- Police & Fire Chiefs
- Others: Attorney, Municipal Judges, Recreation Directors, Planners
Tax sharing by Municipalities In St. Louis County

- Required by state law. Transfers millions of dollars from cities with substantial retail to cities with less retail, and to St. Louis County.
Sales Tax Revenue is shared between municipalities and County government as mandated by state law. Revenue from this “pool” is transferred to other municipalities that might otherwise lack the financial resources to provide public services. Some municipalities appear to have a practice of using traffic fines to supplement their limited tax base and revenue stream. The sales tax “pool” is not widely understood and is a subject of debate in St. Louis County.
Successful St. Louis City, County, Municipal Cooperation Efforts

- Metropolitan Sewer District (1954)
- Metro (formerly Bi-State Development Agency)
- Zoo Museum District
- Downtown stadium & dome
- Airport East Land development
- Riverboat proposals for downtown & Lemay
- City/County Business attractions collaborative
- Mutual aid (Fire/Police)
- Promoting tax credits for redevelopment
- Regional Taxi Cab Commission
- Great Rivers Greenway (2000); added Arch (2013)
Regional

- REJIS – Police checks, IT support services, Court Dockets (3 states)
- Metro (formerly Bi-State), especially on Metrolink construction & operation
- Joint federal enterprise zone including East St. Louis, St. Louis, Wellston
- Retaining major trauma centers (high level emergency rooms)
- Scott Air Force Base retention (10,000 jobs)
- Downtown river bridge opened 2014
- St. Louis Area Regional Response System (STARRS)
- New radio system interconnects around region (2015 opening)
Public Policy Issues

- Who is in Charge of: Education Policy, Economic Development, Law Enforcement, the Court System?
- A policy value to **centralize** policy is a source of conflict
- Centralization generates opposition because of traditional County resident concerns over accountability and independence
- A basic historic value in the St. Louis region is decentralization, limited government control, and small governmental units.
- No Single Entity or Group is in Charge of most Public Policy Areas
- The Result is Conflict in Policy and Strategy **Within** the Region
Leadership is Key

- Positive Attitude
- Credibility
- Understanding big picture & local interests to get to “YES”
- Trade Offs: Local Control, Quality, Cost, Benefits, Politics
- Good local efforts + Good regional efforts = Win/Win